BLISTER RUST NEWS SERVICE

Clip Sheet No. 7

(Not to be released before November 19, 1923).
(To be used by Editors as fill-ins).

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The Cultivated Black Currant a Menace to White Pine.

The cultivated black currant, sometimes known as the English black currant, is one of the chief agencies in the long-distance spread and local establishment of the white pine blister rust. One of the first infection areas in this country, located at Kittery Point, Maine, was due to the presence of this currant. Inquiries brought out the information that these bushes had been brought from England as cuttings during the summer of 1897 and planted in a garden at Kittery Point. The age of the oldest cankers found on pine coincides with the introduction of these cuttings. While other currants are more or less susceptible to the rust, the cultivated black currant, because of its greater susceptibility, is the most favorable host for the development of the pine-infecting rust spores. Hence, the black currant is the first to become diseased in uninfected regions. It then infects other nearby currants and gooseberries and white pine, thus bringing about the local establishment of the disease.

Not only was this the case in the East; but even in British Columbia and Washington the first infection in any locality has been on the cultivated black currant. The growing and cultivation of this bush is deprecated by the Department of Agriculture, in regions where white pine grows, on account of the susceptibility of cultivated black currants to blister rust and the great damage to the pines which results from its presence in any community.

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Blister Rust Increasing Rapidly in Northeastern States.

About ten years ago the blister rust was not known to be on a single native white pine in this country, although its presence had been discovered on cultivated black currants at Geneva, New York in 1906 some eight years previously. Seven years ago it had become so wide-spread that systematic scouting showed it to be prevalent throughout New England and New York, and local infections were found in a few places in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Four years ago a rod-wide survey 39.5 miles in length in northern New Hampshire showed that 12.5% of the native white pines examined were infected. Other strip surveys in New York and Vermont in the same year showed from 3.1 to 6.8% of the pines already attacked. Individual plots studied in New England and New York gave an infection percent varying from 6.2 to 51.5. Today, as a result of extensive surveys of this character, we know that in the white pine region of the Northeastern states infection of the native white pine ranges from 7 to 20%. In some local areas, the mortality from blister rust runs as high as 31% of the commercial white pine in the stand, and no reproduction is possible.

The sooner, therefore, that control measures are applied and the disease carriers (the currants and gooseberries) are destroyed, the less will be the loss to the pine crop, the owner and the state.

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White pine lumber is necessary to the economic life of New England. To safeguard this lumber for future use, the present generation must protect their pines from the blister rust. Ask your State Forester how to do it.

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Waste land is a drain on the pocketbook of the owner as well as the community. Plant it to white pine, the best timber crop tree for most areas in southern New England and New York. At time of planting insure its life from the blister rust attack by destruction of nearby currants and gooseberries.

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